



State of Ohio Environmental Protection Agency

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NEWS RELEASE

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East Liverpool Air Quality Study Confirms Unacceptably High Levels of Manganese and Chromium in Outdoor Air

Ohio EPA Director Asks State and Federal Officials for Help in Assessing Potential Human Health Effects; Seeks Immediate Controls from Suspected Source S.H. Bell Company

A comprehensive Ohio EPA air quality study in East Liverpool (Columbiana County) has found manganese and chromium in outdoor air at levels high enough to constitute a public health nuisance. Ohio EPA Director Chris Korleski has asked state and federal health officials for assistance in evaluating potential human health impacts. In addition, Korleski is pursuing enforcement action against S.H. Bell Company, the owner and operator of two facilities suspected of emitting the hazardous air pollutants.

The public health nuisance is based on dozens of outdoor air samples collected between 2000 and 2007 from three monitors located at the East Liverpool School Board Administration building (500 Maryland Avenue), Port Authority building (1250 St. George Street) and East Liverpool Water Plant (2220 Michigan Avenue). Average concentrations of manganese exceeded U.S. EPA standards at all three locations. The highest concentrations at the water plant averaged 34 times U.S. EPA's recommended safe levels for inhalation exposure. The Michigan Avenue monitor showed the highest concentrations of chromium at two times the acceptable health risk values for carcinogens.

"Recently, I was briefed on the air quality study in East Liverpool and its findings of unusually high concentrations of manganese and chromium," said Korleski. "I am very concerned about these findings and the potential for impacts to human health and the environment. I am moving quickly to bring other agencies up to speed on this study."

Director Korleski has shared the sampling results with local officials, the Ohio Department of Health, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection, Occupational Safety and Health Administration and U.S. EPA. In addition, he has requested the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) conduct a community health study and assist in evaluating potential health impacts. ATSDR is a public health agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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While there are several minor sources of manganese and chromium emissions in East Liverpool, Ohio EPA determined S.H. Bell is the major source contributing to elevated outdoor air concentrations. In a February 4, 2008 letter, Director Korleski asked S.H. Bell to promptly reply to proposed Director's Final Findings and Orders which would require the company to take immediate steps to control air emissions at the Stateline and Little England facilities. Control measures would include enclosing some storage piles and screening operations, tarping trucks, paving roads, and using water trucks, sweepers and other means to minimize dust.

S.H Bell's Stateline facility at 2217 Michigan Avenue (a portion of the Stateline facility is located in Pennsylvania) and Little England facility at 1st Saint George Street and Walter streets, handle, process and store ferroalloys. A third area facility is located in Newell, West Virginia.

Manganese is a naturally occurring metal found in many types of rocks and can enter the air from iron, steel and power plants, coke ovens, and dust from mining operations. Long periods of exposure to high levels of manganese can cause mental and emotional disturbances, slow and clumsy body movements, and damage to the kidneys, liver and brain.

Chromium is a naturally occurring element found in rocks, animals, plants, soil and volcanic dust and gases. In air, chromium compounds are present mostly as fine dust particles which eventually settle over land and water. Breathing high levels of chromium can cause skin irritations, nose bleeds, ulcers, and an increased risk of cancer.

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East Liverpool Ohio Air Quality Study 2008:

www.epa.state.oh.us/pic/media/east-liverpool-study.pdf

Letter to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR):

www.epa.state.oh.us/pic/media/east-liverpool-atsdr.pdf

Letter to S.H. Bell and Proposed Director's Findings and Orders:

www.epa.state.oh.us/pic/media/east-liverpool-letter.pdf

Frequently Asked Health Questions About Manganese:

www.atsdr.cdc.gov/tfacts151.pdf

Frequently Asked Health Questions About Chromium:

www.atsdr.cdc.gov/tfacts7.pdf

